



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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3 1761 11637222 8

Socio-economic Series

Issue 55-2

SPECIAL STUDIES ON 1996 CENSUS DATA:

HOUSING CONDITIONS IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

Introduction

CMHC is responsible for monitoring housing conditions and providing up-to-date information to inform and assist decision-making, planning and policy formation by industry, all levels of government and non-profit organizations.

This is the second in a series of concise studies that explore the housing conditions of households reported by the 1996 Census of Canada. This study presents data from Canada's 25 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)¹:

- 3 in Atlantic Canada (St. John's, Halifax and Saint John)
- 15 in Central Canada (Trois-Rivières, Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Québec City, Sherbrooke, Montréal, Ottawa-Hull, Oshawa, Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines-Niagara, Kitchener, London, Windsor, Sudbury and Thunder Bay)
- 7 in Western Canada (Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria).

Commonly Used Terminology

Most Canadians have access to a dwelling unit that is **adequate** in condition (does not require major repairs), **suitable** in size (has enough bedrooms) and **affordable** (shelter costs are less than 30 % of before-tax household income). Some Canadians live in dwellings which do not meet one or more of these standards. In some cases these households could afford to rent alternative housing which meets all three standards; in some cases they cannot. A household is said to be in **core housing need** if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards **and** it would have to spend 30 % or more of its income to pay the average rent of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards. More details on terminology, data definitions and national level data are provided in the first study in this series: *Canadian Housing Conditions* (Research Highlights Issue 55-1).

Findings

Census Metropolitan Areas Account for Almost Two-thirds of Canadian Households

CMAs hold about 6.3 million (64%) of the 9.8 million non-Native households studied.

Most Canadians in Census Metropolitan Areas are Well-housed

About 4.1 million (66%) of the 6.3 million households in CMAs were at or above all three housing standards (see Table 1). Another 1 million households (15%) had sufficient financial means to rent local housing which meets all three standards.. Some 1.2 million households (19%) were in core housing need as defined above. Some of these were in rent-geared-to-income social housing which required the tenant to pay 30% of their incomes in rent.

Canadians' housing generally has been increasing in size and amenities. The housing stock is expanding each year. In 1998, new starts in CMAs exceeded 95,000 units (69% of overall Canadian housing starts)². The average size of new homes has been increasing and existing houses are being upgraded. Renovation spending in Canada in 1998, estimated at close to \$23 billion³, exceeded expenditures on new construction. CMAs likely accounted for roughly two-thirds of the total expenditures on renovation; i.e., over \$15 billion.

Over 99% of housing starts and completions in CMAs in 1998 was market housing. The rest (less than half of one per cent) was social housing, mostly apartment building units in Vancouver.



¹ A CMA consists of an urban core having a population of at least 100,000 and the adjacent areas (urban and rural) that have a high degree of social and economic integration with it.

² See CMHC's *Canadian Housing Statistics 1998* for data on housing construction in individual CMAs.

³ See CMHC *Annual Report 1998*.

**Table 1: Households and Housing Conditions
in Census Metropolitan Areas (in 000's)**

Census Metropolitan Area	All Households	Households At or Above All Housing Standards	Households Below Housing Standards	
			Could Afford to Meet All Standards	In Core Housing Need
St. John's	57	41	6	10
Halifax	120	84	13	23
Saint John	45	32	6	7
Atlantic Canada subtotal	222	157	25	40
Trois-Rivières	53	38	6	10
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	55	40	7	8
Québec City	259	184	30	45
Sherbrooke	57	39	7	11
Montréal	1,246	796	189	260
Ottawa-Hull	361	251	46	64
Oshawa	89	62	13	14
Toronto	1,392	830	277	285
Hamilton	222	152	30	40
St. Catharines-Niagara	135	96	15	24
Kitchener	133	92	18	23
London	145	99	17	29
Windsor	99	70	13	17
Sudbury	57	40	7	11
Thunder Bay	44	33	5	7
Central Canada subtotal	4,346	2,820	678	848
Winnipeg	232	164	31	36
Regina	66	51	7	9
Saskatoon	74	56	7	11
Edmonton	290	208	42	40
Calgary	285	206	38	41
Vancouver	631	392	112	128
Victoria	119	80	17	22
Western Canada subtotal	1,698	1,157	255	286
All Census Metropolitan Areas Total	6,266	4,134	958	1,174

About 70% of housing starts and completions in CMA's in 1998 was intended for non-condominium home ownership, 25% for condominium ownership, and 5% for rental. Less than 1% was for co-op housing.

The percentage of households in 1996 meeting all three standards (adequacy, suitability and affordability) in the 25 CMA's taken together (66%) was close to, but slightly below, the national average (68%). The percentage of households experiencing core housing need (19%) was just above the national average (18%). Average shelter costs in

CMA's (\$765 per month) exceeded the national average (\$690 per month) by 11%. The average shelter cost-to-income ratio was also higher in CMA's (24% as compared to 22% nationally). Overall it appears that on average, housing conditions in rural and small urban areas slightly bettered those in CMA's.

Households in core housing need in CMA's tended to be lower income, tenants, or made up of unattached individuals. Further, households in core housing need included larger percentages of female lone parents (16%) and senior-led households (25%) than the corresponding percentages of these groups in the population (8% and 20%, respectively) (see Table 2). This picture in CMA's is similar to the Canada-wide picture described in *Canadian Housing Conditions*. Tenants, however, made up a larger proportion of households in CMA's (39%) than for the nation as a whole (35%), and a larger segment (73%) of households in core housing need in CMA's than in Canada as a whole (68%).

How Metropolitan Areas Compare

There was a wide variation in housing conditions among CMA's.

The percentage of households living in dwelling units that meet all three standards (averaging 66% in CMA's)

varied from 60% in Toronto to 77% in Regina. Similarly, the percentage of households whose housing did not meet one or more standards but which had sufficient financial means to rent alternative local housing which does meet all three standards, averaged 15%, and ranged from 10% in Regina, Saskatoon and Thunder Bay to 20% in Toronto.

Montréal had the highest proportion of its households in core housing need (21%, just above Toronto's which was a shade under 20.5%) and Regina the lowest (13%). As noted above, the average for CMA's was 19%.

Table 2: Comparison of Housing Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas

	In 25 CMAs	CMA Range	Canada
Number of Households Studied (millions)	6.3	0.044 to 1.392	9.8
Meeting All 3 Standards (%)	66	60 to 77	68
Could Afford to Meet Standards (%)	15	10 to 20	14
In Core Housing Need (%)	19	13 to 21	18
Economic Characteristics:			
Average Shelter Cost (\$ per month)	765	515 to 941	690
Average Shelter Cost-to-Income Ratio (%)	24	19 to 25	22
Tenure Characteristics:			
Owners (%)	61	50 to 73	65
Tenants (%)	39	27 to 50	35
Demographic Characteristics:			
Unattached Individuals (%)	30	21 to 36	29
Female Lone Parents (%)	8	7 to 11	8
Senior-led (%)	20	15 to 28	21
Composition of Households in Core Housing Need:			
Total in Need (millions)	1.2	0.007 to 0.285	1.7
% Which are Owners	27	15 to 39	32
% Which are Tenants	73	61 to 85	68
% Which are Unattached Individuals	52	41 to 66	51
% Which are Female Lone Parents	16	13 to 25	17
% Which are Senior-led	25	18 to 35	26

Average shelter costs (including both owners and tenants) varied widely, from \$515 monthly in Trois-Rivières to \$941 monthly in Toronto. Average shelter cost-to-income ratios were lowest, at 19%, in Regina and highest, at 25%, in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver.

There were also large differences among the CMAs in the percentages of households which were:

- tenants (27% in Oshawa and Thunder Bay, but 50% in Montréal);
- unattached individuals (21% in St. John's and Oshawa; 36% in Victoria); and
- senior-led (15% in Calgary; 28% in St. Catharines-Niagara and Victoria).

Households led by female lone parents showed relatively less variation, with the lowest proportion (7%) in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria, and the highest (11%) in St. John's.

The percentages of households in core housing need which had specific tenure or demographic characteristics varied widely among CMAs:

- tenants: from 61% in Thunder Bay to 85% in Sherbrooke;
- unattached individuals: from 41% in St. John's to 66% in Sherbrooke;
- female lone parents: from 13% in Vancouver to 25% in St. John's and Saint John;
- senior-led: from 18% in Calgary to 35% in Thunder Bay.

Both average income and average shelter costs were below the overall CMA average in the nine smallest CMAs (Thunder Bay, Saint John, Trois-Rivières, Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Sherbrooke, Sudbury, St. John's, Regina, Saskatoon) (see Table 3). Average incomes in these CMAs ranged from 75% of the overall CMA average in Sherbrooke to 97% in Thunder Bay. Average shelter costs varied from 67% of the average for all CMAs in Trois-Rivières to 90% in Sudbury.

The seven medium-sized CMAs in Table 3 (Oshawa, Windsor, Victoria, Halifax, Kitchener, St. Catharines-Niagara, London) had ranges of average incomes, shelter costs and proportions in core housing need which

generally started and ended higher than the corresponding ranges for both the nine small CMAs and the six large CMAs (Hamilton, Winnipeg, Québec City, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa-Hull).

Two of the three largest CMAs, Vancouver and Toronto, had above average household incomes (105% and 116%, respectively, of the overall CMA average income) and high shelter costs (112% and 123%, respectively, of the CMA average shelter cost). In Montréal, however, average household income and average shelter cost were each 87% of the corresponding overall CMA average. All three of these CMAs had above average proportions of their households in core housing need.

There was considerable overlap in the ranges of the proportion of households in core housing need among the four CMA size categories shown in Table 3.

Individual CMA data are provided in Tables 4 and 5.

Other data, discussed below, supports the view that urban housing markets are very diverse.

Table 3: Comparison of CMAs by Size Category

CMA Size Category*	Number with average income above CMA average	Number with average shelter costs above CMA average	Range of ratio of average income to CMA average income (%)	Range of ratio of average shelter cost to CMA average shelter cost (%)	Range of proportion of households in core housing need (%)
9 Small	0	0	75 to 97	67 to 90	13 to 20
7 Medium	3	3	90 to 111	86 to 119	16 to 20
6 Large	3	3	84 to 109	79 to 108	14 to 18
3 Very Large	2	2	87 to 116	87 to 123	20 to 21

* Note to table:

From smallest to largest:

Small (Less than 75,000 households): Thunder Bay, Saint John, Trois-Rivières, Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Sherbrooke, Sudbury, St. John's, Regina, Saskatoon;

Medium (75,000 to less than 200,000 households): Oshawa, Windsor, Victoria, Halifax, Kitchener, St. Catharines-Niagara, London;

Large (200,000 to less than 500,000 households): Hamilton, Winnipeg, Québec City, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa-Hull;

Very Large (500,000 or more households): Vancouver, Montréal, Toronto.

CMA Dwelling Types Vary

Although 57% of Canadian dwellings are single-detached, the percentage of single-detached units in CMAs varies from 31% in Montréal to 69% in Regina. Similarly, the percentages of other dwelling types range widely among CMAs:

- semi-detached and duplexes: from 2% in Saint John to 8% in Toronto;
- row housing: from 2% in Trois-Rivières to 14% in Ottawa-Hull;
- apartments: from 22% in Oshawa and St. Catharines-Niagara to 61% in Montréal.

Average Unit Selling Prices also Vary Widely

In the quarter ending December 1998, unit selling prices of newly completed and unoccupied single detached and semi-detached dwellings in CMAs averaged about \$244,000. There were significant variations among CMAs, with these prices averaging from \$88,000 in Sherbrooke to as much as \$455,000 in Vancouver.

As do Vacancy Rates

Vacancy rates in privately initiated rental apartment structures of six or more units averaged 3.4% in CMAs in October 1998 (about 44,000 units vacant out of a total of 1.3 million), but ranged from 0.5% in Calgary to over 16% in St. John's. There was even wider variation in vacancy rates for particular types of apartments: 0.1% for three-bedroom apartments in Calgary to over 19% for bachelor apartments in St. John's. In seven CMAs vacancy rates decreased as the apartment size increased, but in the other CMAs there was no relationship between vacancy rates and apartment size.

And Average Monthly Rents

Average monthly rents also varied among CMAs, but not as widely as vacancy rates. In October 1998 a bachelor apartment

in a building with six or more units cost as little as \$283 in Sherbrooke, but \$590 in Vancouver. Rents in one bedroom units ranged from \$371 to \$677, again in Sherbrooke and Vancouver, respectively. Two-bedroom apartments were available from \$421 in Trois-Rivières to \$879 in Toronto, and three-bedroom units from \$463 to \$1,043 in these two CMAs, respectively.

Conclusion

Information from the 1996 Census indicates that almost two-thirds of Canadian households are living in Census Metropolitan Areas, and the vast majority of these are in or could afford housing that meets or exceeds all housing standards. Other information shows that the housing stock in Census Metropolitan Areas is increasing each year, as well as the average size of new homes and existing houses are being upgraded.

There were, however, 1.2 million households (19%) in CMAs that were in core housing need. Similar to the pattern for Canada as a whole, households in core housing need in CMAs tended to be lower income, tenants, and/or made up of unattached individuals, and featured disproportionate numbers of female lone parents and senior-led households.

There is a wide variation among CMAs in the economic, tenure and demographic characteristics of households and in their housing conditions. Average shelter costs and average incomes in the smaller CMAs are below the corresponding overall CMA averages. They are above average in the very largest CMAs, with the exception of Montréal. However, Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal all had above average proportions of their households in core housing need.

**Table 4: Economic, Tenure and Demographic Characteristics
of Households in Census Metropolitan Areas**

Census Metropolitan Area	Average Shelter cost (\$ per month)	Average Shelter Cost- to-Income Ratio (%)	Owners (000's)	Tenants (000's)	Unattached Individuals (000's)	Female Lone Parents (000's)	Senior-Led (000's)
St. John's	659	22	40	18	12	6	10
Halifax	694	23	74	46	34	11	21
Saint John	542	20	30	15	12	4	10
Trois-Rivières	515	22	31	23	17	4	11
Chicoutimi- Jonquière	547	21	34	21	13	5	10
Québec City	604	23	146	113	85	21	47
Sherbrooke	546	23	29	27	19	5	10
Montréal	668	25	627	619	412	111	240
Ottawa-Hull	826	23	219	142	107	30	61
Oshawa	910	23	64	24	19	7	16
Toronto	941	25	837	555	371	118	261
Hamilton	784	23	148	73	60	17	53
St. Catharines- Niagara	660	22	98	37	37	11	38
Kitchener	773	23	85	48	35	10	25
London	747	23	90	55	45	12	31
Windsor	700	21	70	29	29	9	23
Sudbury	692	22	37	20	16	5	12
Thunder Bay	657	20	32	12	13	3	11
Winnipeg	614	21	157	75	77	17	56
Regina	602	19	47	20	21	5	15
Saskatoon	584	21	49	25	24	5	15
Edmonton	681	21	194	96	84	22	50
Calgary	762	22	191	93	83	20	42
Vancouver	856	25	388	243	210	42	125
Victoria	770	24	76	43	43	8	34
All Census Metropolitan Areas Total	765	24	3,795	2,471	1,879	509	1,225

Table 5: Tenure and Selected Demographic Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need in Census Metropolitan Areas

Census Metropolitan Area	Owners (000's)	Tenants (000's)	Unattached Individuals (000's)	Female Lone Parents (000's)	Senior-Led (000's)
St. John's	3	7	4	2	2
Halifax	6	17	12	5	5
Saint John	2	5	3	2	2
Trois-Rivières	2	8	6	2	2
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	2	6	5	1	2
Québec City	9	36	28	6	12
Sherbrooke	2	9	7	2	3
Montréal	49	211	150	41	70
Ottawa-Hull	16	49	33	11	14
Oshawa	5	9	6	3	4
Toronto	90	196	122	48	70
Hamilton	12	27	21	7	12
St. Catharines-Niagara	9	15	12	4	8
Kitchener	6	17	11	4	6
London	7	21	15	5	7
Windsor	6	11	9	3	5
Sudbury	3	8	6	2	3
Thunder Bay	3	4	4	1	2
Winnipeg	11	25	23	5	11
Regina	3	6	5	1	2
Saskatoon	3	8	7	2	2
Edmonton	12	28	22	7	8
Calgary	14	27	21	6	7
Vancouver	40	88	65	17	27
Victoria	6	16	14	3	6
All Census Metropolitan Areas Total	319	855	610	191	293

For further information on 1996 Census housing data please contact:

Mr. John Engeland
 Research Division
 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
 700 Montreal Road
 Ottawa ON Canada K1A 0P7
 Your comments on this study and suggestions for further research are welcomed, and should be addressed to:
 Director,
 Research Division
 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
 700 Montreal Road
 Ottawa ON Canada K1A 0P7

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The Canadian Housing Information Centre
 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
 700 Montreal Road
 Ottawa, ON K1A 0P7

Telephone: 1 800 668-2642
 FAX: 1 800 245-9274

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